

SMALL FARM ECONOMY

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news. An hour or so later the man brings the cattle in from the fields, if they have been grazing during the day. He is ready for evening tea. 512
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At that hour the work of the men is over for the day, but that of the woman goes on. She must prepare, serve, and clean up after the tea, and then go milk the cows brought in from the fields. Her work ends only with the separating that takes place when she brings her milk into the house. Even then, while the men may sit round the fire talking over the day's work or the affairs of the community, she is not idle. If the children need help in lessons, it is she who gives it to them. She puts them to bed, and, if she returns then to join the men at the fire, she continues with knitting and baking. When the whole family has finally gone off to bed, it is she who must close up the house at night and slake the fire in the hearth.

Work round and inside the house is continuous and varies very little from day to day and season to season. It involves a continuous activity by which the household group orders its life and fulfills its needs of nourishment and shelter in the midst of a carefully patterned regularity of habitual behaviors. What variation there is in the accepted pattern is itself confined to narrow range. Certain chores indispensable in the day-to-day habits of the people are divided among days of the week. One woman informant, a small farmer's wife in Inagh, gave as her weekly round a much more rigid daily division of tasks than is actually to be observed. On Monday she did the washing, on Tuesday the ironing, on Thursday she made butter, on Friday she went to market, on Saturday she got ready for Sunday, and on Sunday she went to mass and did as little as she could. Really, however, it is only on Sunday that there comes any serious alteration in the daily round. [527]

Work in the land beyond the haggard and the house is less restricted and more varied. It has a greater range of

1 [about 5 P.M. - Analysis]

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labors, for all the tasks not strictly connected with the household fall in their province. We shall have occasion later to examine fully the sexual dichotomy of labor such a division of tasks represents.

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For the countryman the Christmas season, from the beginning of Advent to Epiphany or "Little Christmas" (January 6), is the dead of winter. It is a period in which all farm work is at a standstill. The farmer has completed the last of his harvest and brought in the last of his potatoes from the field. The cattle are securely housed against the winter cold. The farmer feels himself free to sit round the house during the cold wet days and devote his season to holiday. The working day is at its shortest. Outside, the weather is usually unsettled, a cold rain falling on the sodden fields. It is for him as though the course of the year had stopped and were waiting, gathering its forces for the new year.

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It is a period of great social activity in the local community. The very important religious ceremonies of the season call forth an intensified activity in the parish. There are constant visits back and forth; each house is ready to offer its hospitality to its neighbors; and the community gives itself over to dances, cards, talk, and calls. Not until the religious season closes with Epiphany does the countryman feel that the year begins anew.

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With the beginning of the year, the cold uncertain weather with its succession of bitter wet days, leaving the fields too wet to work, does not end, but the Christmas season has marked the transition. The farmer must now make his plans for the spring planting, lay in his seed, repair machinery, and make ready for the season about to begin. On drier days he can busy himself in the field in cleaning ditches and drainages. In the evenings much of the conversation on visits and at home revolves round the coming planting, and both new and traditional experience with

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DISPERSAL AND EMIGRATION

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593 unfortunate that the authors have not statements of the
167 amount of these annual remittances for local districts. The
457 total for Ireland, however, is enormous. There is a marked
434 tendency for emigration from a local region to perpetuate
itself, sons and daughters of each generation going out to
join the members of the last. One district round Cross to
the west of Carrigaholt, a little settlement on the Loop Head
peninsula which juts out from Clare into the Atlantic at
the Shannon's mouth, said locally to be supported by sons
in the Shanghai police force. The first to go became chief
of police in the International Settlement there, and many
places in the force have gone to men of Cross.

167 The authors had the opportunity of examining some of
the family setting in which emigrant remittances operate in
Luogh. There the greatest number of emigrants had gone
out to Boston. In one family, there was a succession of
nephews and nieces following uncles and aunts from the
same farmhouse for four generations. In four recent cases
Luogh boys and girls had married one another in Boston.
In two more they had married in Ireland and emigrated
together.

434 Remittances from sons and daughters arrive around
593 Christmas. In one family the farmer's wife had written
431 to children in America saying that the family were trying
to acquire an addition to their holding from the Land Com-
mission. The children sent them the purchase price. In
this case the daughter sent her regular Christmas remittance
as well. When she was admonished by her parents for such
generosity, she wrote: "I would think it wasn't Christmas
and I hadn't any father and mother if I didn't send them
something."

● [527] Her mention of the festival in the same breath with her
parents is understandable when it is realized that Christmas
is the family festival *par excellence* in Ireland.

434 The role played by emigrated relatives in providing for
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9: Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1942

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in the combined pastimes of feasting and foretelling the future, 796
and cabbages figure in many an old game, for they are of 221
ancient lineage: the potato, barely three centuries introduced,
has not displaced them in traditional ceremony. It is the
young folks' day. Many of the games played turn upon the
theme of identifying the future husband, and we shall see in
the following chapters that match-making and marriage were
among the functions of the great festivals, closely linked up
with the magic of the earth's increase and the prosperity of
crops and animals.

In parts of Ireland curious traditions attach to St.
Martin's Eve (November 10th) and the feast on the following
day. A sheep or a fowl is ceremonially killed and its blood [782]
sprinkled in the corners of the house. No wheel must turn on
the day of the festival. Finally there are the mid-winter
celebrations, now marked by Christmas and New Year, which
carry the year round towards St. Bridget's Eve. On St.
Stephen's Day (December 26th) the hunting of the wren was
formerly an occasion for general revel: it is now little more
than a children's game.

We must conclude this chapter with some suggestions, 443
necessarily brief and tentative, as to the importance of these 527 ●
seasonal gatherings in the social and commercial life of peasant
Ireland. From very early times the major ritual assemblies of
the year provided opportunity for exchange of goods, of
livestock and of news, and for the maintenance of folk
tradition and bardic skill. In ancient Ireland it is recorded
that there were two kinds of assemblies, the "aonach" for
pleasure and the "aireacht" for business, but it seems
probable that, like the great fairs of recent times, they served
both purposes. It is suggestive of the ritual and religious
element in the old assemblies that they generally met upon
hill-tops—often the sites of prehistoric burials—and that they
took place at the fixed times marking the beginning of the
Celtic seasons. May and November remain the favourite
periods for country fairs, and the hiring fairs were always held
at these times. A century ago the February and August fairs
were also of considerable importance. The Old Lammass Fair

443 at Ballycastle, for instance, lasted a full week and though now
 527 limited to a single day is still the great event of the year in
 north Antrim. August and perhaps February were closely
 associated with the sale of sheep, the May and November fairs
 with cattle. In the early 19th century the great fair of
 Ballinasloe in Co. Galway handled as many as 20,000 cattle
 and 90,000 sheep. "Their whole thought," wrote Knight
 of the Mayo peasantry about that time, "seems to be going to
 fairs and selling or exchanging." "A yard of linen or a
 couple of chickens," says Arthur Young, "will carry an
 unemployed hand ten miles."

443 It is by the fairs and not by the calendar that the
 366 countryman dates events. It may be observed that the
 popularity of fairs, with their emphasis on livestock, illustrates
 the strength of the pastoral tradition. They have been some-
 thing of an obstacle to good husbandry because they occur
 at the changes of the seasons and thus interfere with field work,
 particularly with harvest. Nowadays most of the fairs are
 associated with urban settlements, but the name "Fair Hill"
 still clings to the streets where they are held, and many a town
 has its fair hill just outside. On such sites tents were formerly
 erected for refreshment, and there are certain old fair grounds
 now abandoned where you may see the grassy foundations of
 the huts and the fire holes where the giant cauldrons were
 boiled. In the ancient aireachts streets of booths were set up
 for the fair period, so that they might be described as
 temporary towns. Professor MacNeill has put forward the
 thesis that these were the "cities" named by Ptolemy in
 his description of Ireland.

369 This brings us to the problem of urban origins. It is
 361 perhaps true to say that the fair used to be regarded as
 the product of the town, but recent research supports the view
 that the fair precedes the town and was one factor in its rise.
 Apart from comparative evidence drawn from certain north
 African communities, for instance, anyone who has watched a
 small town on fair day must get the impression that he is
 looking at something which has been going on throughout the

9: Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1942

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Mayo a ploughman would be called in to shake a woman at a difficult childbirth, presumably because it is he who prepares the ground and shakes the seed which brings new life to the fields. 845

Music, dancing, games and dramatic performances also played their part in the seasonal gatherings, and one may hazard the guess that the Irishman's passion for betting derives from this source. A ritual element, as in the wake games mentioned in the previous chapter, can often be detected, for example in the following account taken from the source quoted above. It describes a May game or pantomime from the Louth-Armagh border, modified survivals of which were current through most of the 19th century in the Slieve Gullion district. "On May day the figure of a female is made up, fixed upon a short pole and dressed in a fantastic manner, with flowers, ribbons, etc. This figure they call 'The May Baby.' Around it a man and woman (generally his wife) dressed also fantastically with straw, dance to the sound of a fiddle and entertain the people with indecent shows and postures, the figure at the same time being kept moving by the rustic maiden that supports it. These exhibitions cause great merriment among the assembled populace; women who have had no children also attend (some of them from a considerable distance) to see this figure and exhibition, which they imagine will promote fruitfulness in them, and cause them to have children. Money is collected, and when the actors and musician have received some remuneration the remainder is laid out in drink, and the evening passes by jovially." This magic pantomime was originally intended to secure the success of the year's crops. 536
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Such rites and gatherings have gradually been suppressed or won over by the Church; and Sunday evening is now the favourite recreation time for dancing and games. Among the older games, hurley is most popular, and horse-racing has by no means lost its appeal although it has suffered like other amusements from commercial exploitation. On many a 517
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778 like a basin; it contains almost a gallon of water; it is curious how it came there, for there is not a pebble of granite here."

527 The people of the same island keep as a special holiday the 11th of April, St. Leo's day, and will not do any work on it, while the inhabitants of Inishbofin do not observe it at all.

773 2. *Legends and Traditions*.—There are many legends and traditional tales about places on the islands, of which the few which could be collected are given below; the main outlines only, in which all versions agree, are related, as each story was heard from more than one person, and the versions differed in detail.

823 *Lough Bofin (The Lake of the White Cow)*.—A very long time ago, so long that nobody knows exactly when, Inishshark was a well-known island, and was inhabited; but Inishbofin was unknown, as, owing to enchantment, it was invisible. One day two fishermen were lost in a dense fog, and drifted on until they found themselves beside a rock, on which they landed and made a fire.¹ As soon as the fire touched the rock, the fog suddenly lifted, and the men found themselves on the shingly beach (now called the North Beach) of a strange island; on one side of the shingly belt on which they were was the sea, and on the other a lough, and close to them was an old woman driving a white cow down to the water. She drove the cow into the lake, and struck her with a stick, when she was at once turned into a rock. One of the fishermen, who had followed out of curiosity, was very angry at what he saw, and in his rage he struck the woman, and at once both he and she were transformed into stones. The rock and stones may be seen there still. The cow used to rise up out of the lake, and walk about the island when any great event was about to happen, but it is now more than thirty years since she was last seen. It is from this cow that the island takes its name (Inis bo-finne).

173 *Carrig Guairim*.—An old chief of the islands named Guairim (or Gorham), whose castle was situated just above Bofin harbour, had a dispute with the monks of St. Colman's Abbey about the payment of tithe, and, not content with not paying, he, with the assistance of a family named Halligan, took the settlement of the dispute into his own hands by seizing six of the monks, whom he slew by the roadside in Middlequarter, at a spot where their blood is said to be seen still on the anniversaries of the murder. Gorham did not escape unpunished for this bloodthirsty act; he was taken over to Rinvyle

[276] ¹ Another version is—"One of them knocked the ashes out of his pipe, for they had pipes then, though we do not know what they used to smoke in them."

THE THATCHED HOUSE

and among the farming population a new roof is hardly ever³⁴² covered with thatch. The country thatcher finds employment^[463] in patching, not thatching.

The erection of such simple houses as I have described did not call for the services of specialists. When the need arose the³⁴² collective skills of a whole community were available, and one⁴⁷⁶ can readily see how prescribed methods were handed down in⁵²⁷ any particular area. 'The custom on such occasions', wrote Lord George Hill—he is speaking of Donegal in the years before the Great Famine—is for the person who has the work

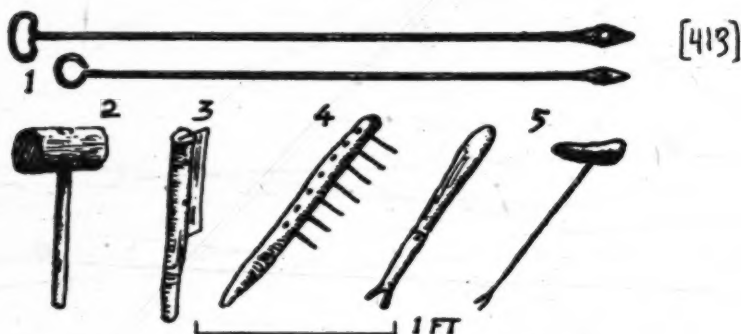


FIG. 15. Thatching tools. (1) Needles, the upper one for hay or fir ropes. (2) Mallet. (3) Trimming knife. (4) Rake. (5) Spurtles for stapping and patching. All from Co. Down except the last, from Co. Meath.

to be done to hire a fiddler, upon which all the neighbours joyously assemble and carry, in an incredibly short time, the stones and timber upon their backs to the site, men, women and children alternately dancing and singing while daylight lasts, when they adjourn to some dwelling where they finish the night, often prolonging the dance to dawn of day'. Like all work done in common, the thatching too was regarded as a sort of festival. In the Aran Islands 'from the moment a roof is taken in hand there is a whirl of laughter and talk till it is ended, and, as the man whose house is being covered is a host instead of an employer, he lays himself out to please the men who work with

¹Lord George Hill, *Gweedore*, 40.

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342 him'.¹ Synge goes on to remark that much of the intelligence
476 and charm of the islanders is due to the absence of a division of
● 527 labour and to the wide development of each individual. Truly
it may be said that with the disappearance of the thatched house
something more than a picturesque archaism passes from the
land.

¹J. M. Synge, *The Aran Islands*, 156.

FAIRS AND GATHERINGS

443 it: 'During the week, beginning on the 26th August, is held
 543 the notorious Donnybrook Fair, professedly for the sale of
 578 horses and black cattle, but really for vulgar dissipation, and
 786 formerly for criminal outrage and the most revolting debauchery. It was for generations a perfect prodigy of moral horrors—a concentration of disgrace upon, not Ireland alone, but civilized Europe. It far surpassed all other fairs in the multitude and grossness of its disgusting incidents of vice; and, in general, it exhibited such continuous scenes of riot, bloodshed, debauchery and brutality, as only the coarsest taste and the most hardened heart could witness without painful emotion.' This was by day; 'the orgies of the night may be better imagined than described'. An anonymous writer is quoted as saying: 'We venture to say that there is more misery and madness, devilment and debauchery, than could be found crowded into an equal space of ground in any other part of this our globe, during five times the same space, which is spent at Donnybrook, in one given year'. The *Gazetteer* then recovers itself and offers excuses for 'describing what ought never to have been described'. One regrets rather that the compiler was so overcome by horror as to forget his statistical duties.

543 The absence of moral restraint which led to extremes of
 ● 527 lawlessness at Donnybrook and elsewhere was a normal and
 443 characteristic accompaniment of these periodic folk-gatherings.
 [786] Such moral holidays are a feature of many societies which have not been greatly influenced by urban ways and values. Their purpose appears to be cathartic, but that there is a lingering fertility magic underlying the excitement is suggested by such strange rituals as those which mark the 'Puck Fair and Pattern' of Kilorglin at the head of Dingle Bay in Co. Kerry. The fair is unfortunately not mentioned in the *Parliamentary Gazetteer*, though the village of Kilorglin is described as 'an unprosperous, sequestered, and almost squalid seat of population; and appears to have acquired marvellously little profit from the advantageousness of its position for both inland and seaward trade'. Puck Fair, held every August, is the great event of the year in West Kerry, and lasts three days. 10th August is 'Gathering Day', the 11th is 'Fair Day', and the 12th 'Scattering Day', terms which have no doubt been handed down from days when

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'the order of the fair' was prescribed and the business lasted several days. On the evening of Gathering Day a procession assembles at the bridge and makes its way to the central square carrying (nowadays in a large cage mounted on a lorry) a billy-goat bedecked with ribbons. He is chained by the horns on a high platform erected for the purpose and, supplied with a liberal stock of cabbages, he presides over the fair. Tradition says that the goat used to stand, 'garlanded by greenery' on the old castle which was erected here by the Geraldines in the thirteenth century. The business of the fair is the sale of live-stock, and as with many another large fair it is a traditional gathering place for the tinkers who in Ireland take the place of the gypsies. On the evening of Scattering Day the Puck is borne triumphantly back to the bridge. The popular explanation of the custom is that it commemorates an occasion when the noise of goats warned the Irish of advancing English forces, but it is more reasonable to see Puck as a symbol of fertility and good luck. 12th August is Old Lammas, and Lammas Day, the 1st August, was known to the Irish as 'Lewy's Fair', in memory of a pre-Christian deity. This season of high summer has many associations with the pastoral freedom of the hills, with young people and with dancing and courting. There are traditions of other Puck Fairs in the south of Ireland, and there were certain fairs at which a white horse was paraded through the assembled crowds and then tied up to preside over the proceedings. [543
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Another celebrated gathering place was the great fair of Ballinasloe, which brought such fame to this Galway town that the *Gazetteer* describes it as 'the cynosure of much the larger part of the western province of Ireland', so prosperous that even its poorer quarters, 'a segregation of lanes, and houses, and cabins, aggregately repulsive', were yet 'greatly less haggard than what constitutes the whole of many a third or second rate town in Ireland'. The fair was held from the 5th to the 9th of October, and during the first half of the nineteenth century the average numbers of sheep and cattle offered for sale were respectively 90,000 and 12,000. Ballinasloe Fair served the west of Ireland in much the same way as the great trysts of Crieff and Falkirk served the Scottish Highlands in the days of

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443 the famous cattle droves.¹ The town lies on one of the sinuous
 527 gravel ridges (eskers) which lead eastwards from the limestone
 543 grazing grounds of east Galway to the crossing of the Shannon
 [361] and then thread their way through a maze of bogs to reach the
 headwaters of the Irish Sea rivers. The eskers provide dry
 [487] footing for roads some of which are routeways of great anti-
 quity, and down to the coming of railways they served as drove
 roads along which cattle and sheep were taken to the fattening
 pastures and markets of the eastern lowlands. The date of the
 great fair of Ballinasloe, in early October, corresponds with
 that of the largest trysts at Crieff and Falkirk, and would have
 allowed time for the movement of livestock to eastern Ireland
 or to the English fairs by All-Hallows or Martinmas.

489 No study of the Irish drove roads has been made as for those
 of Scotland and Wales, but it seems probable that the movement
 439 of livestock along routes from west to east has been developing
 since the Middle Ages, when its logical outcome was the export
 trade in hides from the Irish Sea ports. In the seventeenth
 and eighteenth centuries exports largely took the form of salt
 beef and butter, but since the early nineteenth century the store
 cattle trade has been so dominant that it has latterly accounted
 for half the total export trade of southern Ireland. It involves a
 movement of cattle not only from west to east but from small
 farms to large, and from scanty grazings to the lush fattening
 pastures of Meath or the English lowlands. Apart from small
 strings of beasts on their way to local fairs, the cattle droves
 are today most in evidence in the crowded dockside streets of
 the ports where they are herded on to the cross-channel boats,
 but until quite recently donkeys and goats purchased at fairs in
 the west still travelled to the ports on the hoof. The drover-
 441 dealers who accompanied them were colourful characters whose
 experience stood them in good stead in the wider world. These
 439 dealers in the unwanted residues of the countryside—in rags
 and scrap as well as asses and goats—have often set up as rag-
 and-scrap merchants in the large towns along their routes from
 Belfast and Dublin to the English fairs, and one of them became
 Lord Mayor of a Scottish city. Others made big money as
 pedlars of cloth in America or Australia. Most of these 'pahvees',

¹A. R. B. Haldane, *The Drove Roads of Scotland*.

XIX

FIXED FESTIVALS

THE great fairs, patterns and pilgrimages were attended⁵²⁷ by people who travelled considerable distances and included⁵⁷¹ strange folk from the outside world, 'beyond the mountain men'. It was partly for this reason that they earned a reputation for lawlessness, especially where 'the gatherings' had outlived their original purpose and their real business had become subordinate to pleasure. A Nottingham Goose Fair or a Marlborough Mop Fair may still be conducted with propriety, but in Ireland they would probably have become Donnybrooks. Having little opportunity for regular social contacts as compared^[221] with the villagers of the ploughlands, a pastoral people makes the most of the periodic pauses in the cycle of the seasons.

For climatic reasons these great gatherings have been largely⁵²⁷ confined to the summer half-year between May and November. The winter festivals have been more local, involving the family and the townland rather than rival groups from different parishes and baronies. The feast days of both St. Briget and St. Patrick fall in early spring and their associations are more intimate and have more local colour than those of the saints of high summer such as St. John the Baptist. But the entire round of the year is liberally sprinkled with days of festival, and if we begin with St. Briget it is not merely because she was Irish-born but because her feast marks the beginning of the pastoral year. The blessed Bridie was a cowherd and is therefore associated with cattle and with such flowers as the dandelion—the^[224] Plant of Bride—yielding a milky juice which was believed to nourish the young lambs in spring. St. Briget's Feast was very popular and many superstitious practices, more or less

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- 527 Christianized, cling to the preparations made on St. Briget's
Eve, the last day of January. On that day rushes are fashioned
527 into protective charms known as Briget's Crosses, a name
778 which illustrates how the church has won over pagan symbols,
301 for the 'crosses' take the form of either swastikas or lozenges,
and comparative evidence suggests that they are magic symbols
of suns or eyes (Fig. 85). A three-legged swastika, presumably
an old form, is reserved for use in the byre: its shape may be
compared with the Celtic triskele. The lozenge-shaped charms
have their counterparts in many parts of the world. The Huichols
of Mexico make similar charms of wool mounted on a bamboo
frame: known as a 'god-eyes', they bring good health and
[171] long life to children.¹ A Californian Indian charm made of grass
or rushes is very similar. In the Old World similar magic
'squares' have a wide distribution, in Europe, Africa, Tibet,
Burma, Assam and Indonesia, and farther afield in Melanesia,
Polynesia and Australia. Among the Nagas of Assam the
squares, made of coloured thread, are placed on the graves of
women and protect them against evil spirits.² In Sweden and
Estonia straw squares are strung up as Christmas decorations and
tied to the straw masks worn during Christmas games (Fig. 85).

Briget's Crosses are believed to protect the house and the
livestock from harm and from fire. No evil spirit could pass the
charm, which was therefore hung above the door of house and
byre. The rushes must be pulled, not cut, on St. Briget's Eve,
and care must be taken to fashion the crosses from left to right,
with the sun. As a rule they are left in position until replaced
the following year, though I have seen byres with many crosses
thrust into the underthatch, the decaying accumulation of
annual offerings. In Co. Galway similar crosses made of wood
or straw were also placed in the rafters at Hallowe'en, and the
discovery of a partly burnt rush cross which had been deposited
in a megalith in Co. Limerick points to a more general cult of
the 'cross'.³ A 'love-knot' of similar shape, fashioned out of
sedge leaves, is known from South Wales.

¹F. Toor, *A Treasury of Mexican Folkways* (1947), 72.

²H. E. Kauffmann, *J.R.A.I.*, 73 (1943), 101, 106.

³S. P. O'Riordain, *North Munster Antiquarian Journal*, 1 (1936), 36. For a
study of Briget's Crosses in Co. Armagh, see T. G. F. Paterson, *U.J.A.*, 8
(1945), 43-48.

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- 527 It was popularly believed that the saint wandered through
 776 the countryside on the eve of her feast day. Bread was left on
 the doorstep, and in some districts it was the custom to prepare
 a small bed of rushes or birch twigs and place it by the fire so
 that Bridie might come in and rest. Sometimes the last sheaf of
 harvest was used for the purpose. In south-western Ireland a
 [532] doll made of straw—or decorated churn-staff—was carried
 [292] from house to house by 'Biddy Boys', wearing straw masks
 such as are used by mummers and by strawboys at weddings,
 and singing songs in honour of the saint. They would solicit
 [264] gifts and end the day in jollification. The evening was celebrated
 [787] by a supper of pancakes taken from a plate laid on a rush cross,
 and as on the other quarter-days prognostications were made.
 [789] A ribbon or piece of cloth exposed on St. Briget's Eve became
 endowed with curative powers. It was believed that no work
 which involved the turning of a wheel should take place on the
 saint's day. The placing of a periwinkle in each corner of the
 kitchen likewise hints at a remote pre-agricultural origin for
 the festival, but it came to be associated with the pastoral
 promise of spring, of warmth, new grass, lambs and milk.
 It is said that the saint placed her foot in water on her feast day
 so that on that day it begins to warm up each year.

- St. Patrick is credited with carrying the process a stage
 further by putting a stone in the water, or alternatively 'turning
 [805] up the warm side of the stone'. 17th March marks the end of
 [22] winter and the starting-point of work in the fields. The country-
 man likes to have his first ridge of potatoes planted on that day,
 and he is not greatly moved by the patriotic celebrations which
 are anyhow more in evidence in New York and Boston than in
 Ireland. Traditionally the cult of St. Patrick is strongest in
 Ulster, where hundreds of churches and holy wells are named in
 his honour, and according to legend he was reluctantly accepted
 as patron saint in some of the other Irish regions. They say in
 [191] Ulster that Connachtmen speak with husky accents because
 their forebears stole and ate St. Patrick's goat. Like Columbkille,
 Patrick is remembered for his curses as well as his prophecies,
 [824] for instance he cursed the rushes that pricked him when he
 rested, so that every green rush has a brown tip.

- 527 To refer to all the associations of the movable feasts of

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Easter would take us away from our present subject but mention must be made of some of the folk practices connected with Shrove Tuesday, Ash Wednesday, Easter and Whitsuntide. Shrove Tuesday (Shraft) was a time for hunting the hare, and for feasting in preparation for Lent. A portion of the meat was not eaten but hung in the rafters. It was the great day of the year for marriages, and on that night tricks of many kinds were played on unmarried adults and on courting couples who had not fulfilled their promise. They were serenaded with horn-blowing; animals were tied to the doors of their houses, and cart wheels were rolled down hill. At Ardmore in Co. Waterford a piece of symbolic horseplay was performed by the young men on Ash Wednesday. A hollowed stone with a hole in the centre was the scene of the play. In the hole was stuck a wattle with a handful of tow tied to its top, and unmarried women were made to dance around the stone, holding the tow and spinning while they danced. 'The youths then terminated their amusements by dragging them through the village seated on old logs of wood.'¹

Good Friday was an important day in the farmer's year, the luckiest day on which to begin the sowing of corn. There was an aversion to the use of iron and to the shedding of blood on Good Friday, which was a favourite day for visiting holy wells and the graves of the dead. Shell-fish were eaten, and visits to the shore were enlivened with games and horse-racing. On Easter Day the young folk would be up early in the morning to see the sun dance, and during the day vast quantities of eggs were consumed. The colouring and rolling of eggs are customs kept up by children in many districts. A special Easter Day dance, for which the prize was a large cake exhibited on a garlanded churn-staff, is popularly supposed to have given rise to the expression 'taking the cake', in the sense of beating all comers. If Easter was a lucky time, ominous superstitions attached to Whitsuntide, for example persons born at that time were supposed to have the evil eye, to be fated to die a violent death, or to take a life. A chicken would sometimes be killed in the hands of a Whitsun child to serve as a substitute slaughter. To cross water or go to sea at Whitsun was to invite death by drowning.

¹E. Fitzgerald, *J.R.S.A.I.* (1856), 43.

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- 527 The May Festival, the Gaelic Beltane, remained almost untouched by Christianity, and an astonishingly rich growth of magic beliefs and superstitious customs accumulated around it. They were concerned with the safety of the familiar things which supported life, and especially the milk cows whose 'whitemeats' were to provide the main food-supply until harvest came round once more. It was a matter of pride to have a last formal dish of stirabout on May Day, 'for if they can hold out so well with bread they can do well enough . . . for then milk becomes plenty, and butter, new cheese, and curds and shamrocks are the food of the meaner sort all this season'.¹ It was considered [43] most unlucky and unwise to give away salt, water or fire on May Day lest the luck and 'profit' of the farm went with the gifts. Witches and fairies were unusually active at this time, and [776] many tales are told of the wiles they adopted to outwit the unwary and gain admission to house or byre to do their mischief. It was a wise precaution to pour milk on the threshold, or at the roots of a fairy thorn, and the many protective charms against the stealing of cattle and milk were augmented by others special to the occasion. 'On May Eve the peasantry used to drive all their cattle into old raths and forts thought to be much frequented by the fairies, bleed them, taste their blood, and pour the remainder on the earth'.² It was said that the ghosts of cattle that had been lost could be seen in such places.

527 Portents, prognostications and protection were sought in the
824 familiar flowers of field and hedgerow, in the weeds and shrubs
751 which had followed in man's footsteps and were associated with his secular struggle for survival, especially in those that carried the promise of butter in their golden cups and a free flow of milk in their bounteous white blossom. May flowers, primroses and gorse gathered before sunrise were scattered on the threshold of the house and garlands of 'Summer', as the flowers were called, were hung on the doorposts and even tied to the cows' tails. In the Antrim Glens the mayflowers were crushed to provide a juice with which the cows' udders were washed, and elsewhere buttercups were used for the purpose. Cow dung, if less hygienic, had similar protective power, presumably in

¹Sir Henry Piers, *West-Meath*, 121.

²*U.J.A.* 3 (1855), 165.

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the belief that it contained the essence of the flowers of the fields. Sprigs of rowan were stuck in the midden, placed over the door of the byre and hung on the cows' horns. Flowers were also put around the well, for it was supposed that a milk-thief could steal your summer's milk and butter by skimming the water at this time, or by dragging a rope across a field to collect the dew. Boundary streams were also potent in this connexion, and I was told in Donegal that the milk churn had to be washed on May Day in 'three landlords' waters', that is the meeting place of three properties. 527 ●
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Besides these family rites there were public ceremonies, the lighting of bonfires and parades of May Babies, of May Boys and the May Queen. One of the rhymes sung by May Boys in the west of Ireland runs, in translation: 527

Summer! Summer! the milk of the heifers,
And ourselves brought the summer with us,
The yellow summer, and the white daisy,
And ourselves brought the summer with us.¹

[339]

The May Baby parades link the festival with the fertility of the family as well as the fields. I give an account of the ceremonies as described in Co. Louth in the early nineteenth century: 'On May Day, the figure of a female is made up, fixed upon a short pole and dressed in a fantastic manner, with flowers, ribbons, etc. This figure they call 'The May Baby' . . . Around this figure a man and woman (generally his wife) of the humble class, dressed also fantastically with straw, etc., dance to the sound of a fiddle and entertain the people with indecent shows and postures . . . These exhibitions cause great merriment among the assembled populace; women who have had no children to their husbands also attend to see this figure and performance, which they imagine will promote fruitfulness in them, and cause them to have children.'² 527
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The May Day bonfires and the May Queens are now little more than children's games and excuses for begging. The burning of bones—whence the word bonfire, which in Ireland keeps its original pronunciation—and in particular of horses' 527
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¹Lady Wilde, *The Dublin University Magazine* (1849), 541-60.

²J. Donaldson, *Upper Fews in 1838*, 70.

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- 527 bones, were formerly considered proper to the occasion. There
 [372] were dances round the fires, performed with great dexterity
 and precision by youths armed with cudgels. The May-pole,
 [177] however, and the May-bush observances seem to go with areas
 of strong English influence and do not seem to have been
 [824] generally adopted by the Irish, perhaps because May-trees,
 which are not given this name in Ireland, are likely to be fairy
 thorns and therefore should not be damaged. The May Eve
 assemblies are thus described in eighteenth century Kilkenny:
 'Bloody battles and much confusion and uproar is the mischief
 that follows from the barbarous and unheeded custom of col-
 lecting *May-balls* among the new-married folks . . . The
 hedges and fences, in the outlets of our city, are stripped of
 full-grown hawthorns, whose late blooming pride and fragrancy
 is now miserably dying away on dunghills before cabin doors,
 by way of *May-bushes*, no longer, alas! to afford a nuptial bed to
 the new-married linnet and his mate, but fastened in the ground
 for the vilest purpose—to hang filthy clouts upon'.¹ The gold
 and white balls which were hung on maypoles have been
 regarded as symbols of sun and moon—or it may be of butter
 and milk. Another May Day custom was the licence allowed
 [786] young boys to run about stinging people with nettles, a privilege
 which in my youth in Shropshire was permitted only on 29th
 May, the victims being those who did not wear an oak-apple.

- 527 If the May Day fires are now more in evidence in the back streets
 372 of Belfast than on the high hills, the Midsummer fires still burn
 strongly in some country districts and their pagan flames have
 not been so easily quenched. I saw dozens of them in Co.
 Galway on Midsummer Eve in 1956, mostly at country cross-
 roads. Old men in Donegal have told me that they remembered
 the time when they had counted from their hilltop fire nearly a
 hundred others. Young men would show their mettle by
 jumping to and fro through the flames, and girls by doing so
 hoped to marry early and have many children. We recall that
 [789] leaping is in folk tradition a widely approved method of making
 the crops grow high, and the fires, it is conjectured, were meant
 to encourage the sun, now at its turning point, to shine on
 through the harvest. Midsummer was a time when evil influ-

¹Finn's *Leinster Journal* (4th May, 1768).

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ences affecting human beings and the animals and crops were usually potent. It is remembered that 'the oldest woman in the town' would go round the fire three times on her knees, reciting prayers. To walk three times sunwise round the fire was to ensure a year without sickness, and as the flames died down the cattle were driven through the embers and their backs were singed with a lighted hazel wand: the sticks were preserved and utilized for driving the cows. By tradition everyone carried home a burning stick from the fire, and whoever was first to take it into the house brought the good luck of the year with him. A glowing turf from the fire was carried three times sunwise round the dwelling house, and others were thrown into the growing crops. Yarrow was hung in the house to ward off illness. Fernseed was gathered for its magic powers and divinations made from the roots of bracken and lilies. We have already noticed the custom of retaining some of the ashes from the Midsummer fires to mix with the following season's seed corn.

The third fire-festival of the year is associated with St. Peter's Eve on 28th June, but I have not come across many traditions of St. Peter's bonfires except in Armagh and Wexford: it may thus be mainly restricted to areas where English influence was strong. More widespread and better known, because they have been caught up in many patterns and in such popular pilgrimages as that to Croagh Patrick, are the celebrations of Lammass, originally 1st August, now held on Lammass Sunday, the last in July, which is also known as Garland, Bilberry or Height Sunday. This marked the end of summer and the beginning of harvest: it was a first-fruits festival into which the alien potato has been fitted, and no potatoes were dug before this time. Offerings of flowers and fruits were made at holy wells, and in some places cattle were made to swim through streams and loughs into which lumps of fresh butter had been cast:¹ 'They think no beast will live the whole year through unless they be thus drenched'.² In hilly districts Height Sunday is observed by climbing to a recognized picnic place where bilberries are gathered and games and dancing were formerly enjoyed. In Co. Down a large prehistoric

¹Wood-Martin, *Elder Faiths*, 1, 282.²Sir Henry Piers, *West-Meath*, 121.

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- 527 cairn on the summit of Slieve Croob was until recent years the
372 scene of a great gathering on the first Sunday in August. The
fiddling and dancing are no more, though numbers of young
people still assemble there and frolic in the heather. Blaeberries
(bilberries) were picked into little rush baskets made on the
spot (Fig. 70) and that the occasion was recognized as a
[584] legitimate time of courting is shown by the comment that 'many
a lad met his wife on Blaeberry Sunday'. The name Garland
Sunday derives from the hoops decorated with ribbons and
flowers which were made by unmarried girls and, latterly,
carried to church before being set up in the graveyard to preside
over the dancing with which the day terminated. Rites in
[769] honour of the dead seem to have marked the old Lammass festival,
so that again we notice the association of ancestral spirits
with the fertility of farm and family.

527 By St. Bartholomew's Day, 24th August, harvest is well
under way and the first-saved corn is ready to be thrashed.
By tradition the flails were made ready on this day, and if the
high harvest winds are blowing it is said that the saint is testing
his flails. Next comes Michaelmas, 29th September, linked
closely with the sea, with horses, and, strangely, with the
ceremony of killing a cock or a goose, originally as a sacrifice
in honour of the saint. In some parts Michaelmas was regarded
as one of the most important feasts of the year, but I have not
found any districts where it was, as in Uist, 'much the most
imposing pageant and most popular demonstration of the
Celtic year': nor have I come across any tradition of the rites of
digging up and making presents of wild carrots which was
associated, in the Hebrides, with the eating of cakes made of
mixed flour baked before a stone flag, with the killing of a
lamb, visits to graveyards, and a night of 'dance, song and
love-making'.¹

527 Throughout Ireland these lesser feast days pale in comparison
769 with the culminating festival which marks the end of the dying
year on All-Hallows Eve. An astonishing amount of lore still
clings to Hallowe'en, and we must restrict ourselves to picking
out some of the main elements of this crowded occasion. The crops
should now be all gathered in and no fruit should be picked

¹A. Carmichael, *Carmichael's Gaelic*, I (1928), 198.

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after this date, for the *púca*, a supernatural being, is busy befouling unpicked fruit at Hallowe'en. Here again we notice superstition acting as a stimulus towards the completion of routine tasks. The return of the livestock from their summer grazings, once accompanied by their herders, made the occasion one of family reunion, and this is a strong element in the present festival. But it was also a reunion with the ancestral spirits of the family: for Hallowe'en was preeminently a commemoration of the dead, a time when ghosts and fairies were unusually active, the whole of the world of the supernatural astir and the dead returned to their earthly homes. On that night the grass-grown homesteads—the fairy raths—were wide open and the fairies were on the move to winter quarters, surely a folk memory of a former transhumance. It used to be thought unlucky not to make preparations for the return of the dead by leaving the door of the house open, putting out tobacco and traditional dishes such as sowans—a kind of porridge—and setting seats around the fire. The games and amusements which alone survive have commonly degenerated into pranks and horseplay, but one can detect in them echoes of magical observances. The many divination customs may well have begun as rites to avert evil or to secure the benefits which they now pretend to forecast. Among the things involved in these games and divinations are apples, nuts, oatcakes, cabbages, a ball of yarn, articles made of straw and rushes (Fig. 86), and herbs such as yarrow. The wearing of straw dresses and the breaking of pots are certainly archaic elements. In Co. Cork there survived well into last century a Hallowe'en ceremony similar to the well-known Mari Lwyd of South Wales: a procession was led by a figure clad in a white shirt and carrying a horse's head. This 'white mare' was followed by youths blowing cow-horns, and as they stopped to levy toll from farmhouses they recited a long string of verses 'savouring strongly of paganism'.¹ Hallowe'en bonfires and noisy demonstrations remind us that these features of Guy Fawkes' Day have, in England, been stolen from the older festival.

In certain districts, especially in Connacht, north Munster and south Leinster, strange customs have been associated with

¹J.R.S.A.I. (1853), 303—19.

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- 527 the Feast of St. Martin on 11th November. On St. Martin's
782 Eve the blood of a farm animal or fowl was spilled and sprinkled
in the corners of the house, on the door-posts and windows, and
in the byre and stable. In some areas the blood was also used to
make the mark of a cross on the forehead of each member of the
household. The flesh was eaten on St. Martin's Day, which is
by tradition one of the feast days on which flesh meat is taken.

[292]
[285]
[769]

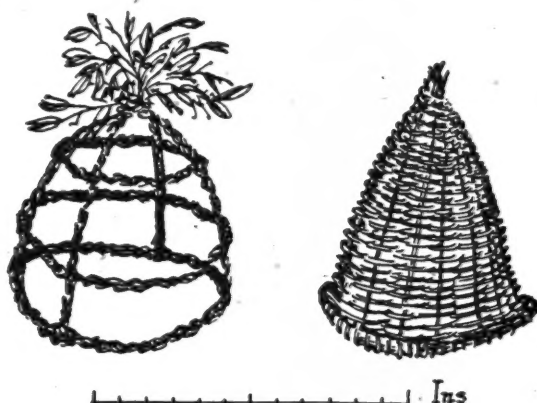


FIG. 86. Hallowe'en caps. *Left*: of plaited straw, Co. Down. *Right*: of woven rushes, Co. Kerry.

We recall that in Scotland a mart was an animal killed at Martinmas to be salted down as winter food, and it may well be that this very practical custom grew out of the cult, which was intended 'to exclude evil spirits for the year'.¹ It seems that seabirds were sometimes killed for the occasion, and there are many superstitions relating to the ill luck which attended anyone who went fishing at Martinmas. Wheel-turning of any kind, whether on cart, mill or spinning wheel, was prohibited. These sacrificial offerings and tabus must be of great antiquity and relate to the preparations for winter. St. Martin's Summer was regarded as the last spell of fine weather before the gales began in earnest. There are hints in folklore that ailing children were

¹ I. Weld, *Roscommon*, 553.

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sometimes killed at this time, so that the animal slaughter may be a sacrificial substitute. 527 ●
[782]

Although Christmas is the outstanding Christian festival of the year its traditional 'Twelve Days' of holiday are steeped in pagan lore and in folk practices relating to the winter solstice and the new year. In Co. Cavan I came across a custom known as 'blowing the Christmas horns' by which youths heralded the festival by blowing horns from hilltops. The burning of candles on Christmas Eve is a ceremony which involved divination as well as devotion. 'Each district seems to have its taste in colour. For example, in Limerick and Clare white candles are mainly used, while red and green are popular everywhere. In the Midland areas pink candles are sought, and in some parts of Dublin only blue candles will be taken. In Killarney nothing less than a 6-lb. candle will suffice for the occasion'.¹ On Christmas Day traditional ball-games were played, often between parishes, and near the coasts these meetings took place on the strands. [526]

St. Stephen's Day is in many parts of the country associated with the hunting of the wren, and the sport is not entirely extinct. It seems that some details of the ceremony, such as the rhymes which are sung, are of English origin, but the wrenboys often wore straw masks in the native tradition, and occasionally animal skins or horns. The wrens were killed beforehand by noisy and excited bands of youths, and carried on a holly bush or a decorated wooden tray on St. Stephen's Day (Fig. 87). The procession, shouting and singing the prescribed songs to the accompaniment of home-made skin tambourines, made its way from house to house demanding money or drinks. The wrenboy processions, despite their English rhymes, appear to be a degeneration of more elaborate performances of native origin which had affinities with the mummers' plays and which like them may have been attracted by the powerful prestige of the Christmas festival from their proper season of spring. At one time the wrenboy ceremonies involved much fertility symbolism and were attended by men disguised as women.² The robin, linked with the wren in superstition, was also the object of persecution in south-western Ireland, but in this case the tail 527
825

¹Ireland (Bulletin of the Department of External Affairs) No. 303 (1955), 10.

²E. R. R. Green, *U.J.A.*, 9 (1946), 3-21.

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- 527 825 was pulled out and the bird's life spared: 'In severe winters a robin with a tail was rarely seen.'¹ Another popular Boxing-Day pastime was bull-baiting, though in Kilkenny, where it was officially supported by the town officials and was presumably an English introduction, it was held on the following day, St. John's. In several parts of the country bull-baiting continued well into last century, in Kilkenny down to 1837.²

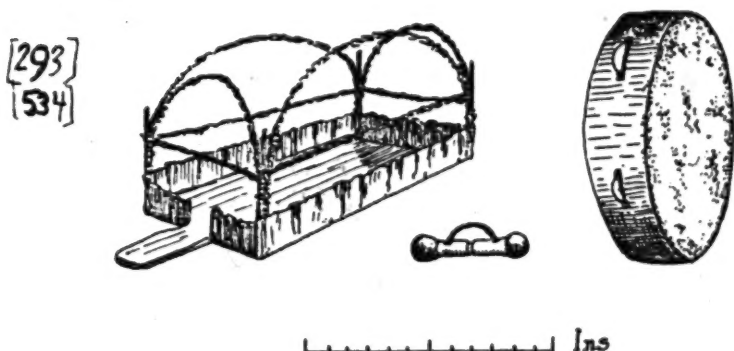


FIG. 87. Hunting the wren. Wren Box for carrying dead wren, and wrenboys' tambourine and stick, Co. Clare. (National Museum, Dublin.)

- 527 New Year's Day similarly has attracted to itself some of the portents proper to the older year's beginning on 1st November. The prosperity of the individual and the household is felt to depend on the events of New Year's Day. The fairies are active on New Year's Eve and it is well for people to stay indoors that night. First-footing ceremonies appear to be confined to families of recent Scots origin, but the idea behind them is widespread. In parts of Co. Down it is customary for youths to prepare little 'wisps' of straw or dry grass and go from house to house distributing them together with New Year's greetings in the expectation of a gift. In the west on the last night of the year (or alternatively on the eve of Twelfth Night) a large 'Christmas Loaf' specially prepared for the occasion was taken

¹W. R. Le Fanu, *Seventy Years of Irish Life*, 41.

²J. G. R. Prim, *J.R.S.A.I.* (1853), 326.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

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by the head of the house and hammered against the barred doors⁵²⁷ ●
and windows to the accompaniment of an Irish rhyme which
warned famine to retire.¹ This too has parallels with the
banging of doors and the 'pounding away of hunger' at Hal-
lowe'en.

¹J.R.S.A.I. (1853), 146.

14: Westropp B-4, 5 (no date) 1910-12
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
County Clare

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Collectanea.

178 fires have been more numerous. Formerly bones were saved up
746 to crackle as they burnt in the fires, and even when this ceased
[789] the pronunciation "bone-fire" continued. Magical rites con-
nected with milk and butter were, very recently, performed
secretly at wells on May Eve (April 30th) as described later.

526 Other annual observances were sports which first included, and
• 527 then lapsed into, mere races. The *iraghts*, or gatherings, at the
195 mound and inauguration place of Moy Eir (Magh Adhair) lasted
down to 1838, and were still very faintly remembered by old
people in 1890 as having died out in the Famine years, with so
much of the social brightness of the people. I may note that this
place,—the reputed seat of Adhar, a Firbolg prince, about the
beginning of our era,—became the place of inauguration of the
native princes of Thomond from before 877, and continued so
down, at least, to 1570. The name Magh Adhair (probably
Moy Eir) at first covered the whole central plain of east Clare, but
steadily shrank to that of a small tribal territory, and then, in
1584 and 1655, to the two townlands of Corbally and Toonagh
(Llanagh-moyree). By 1838 it was attached only to two fields,—
"Moyross, or Moyree, parks,"—in the former, and is now confined
to a single field, "Moyars Park," and to the "rath" or mound
at Toonagh, across the brook. Notices of the inaugurations are
numerous from 1275 to 1311, and occur sporadically from 877
onwards. Other and less famous gatherings were at Creganagh
("Fair or Assembly Crag")⁸ on the bare hill over Termon in the
Burren, and at a field in Cahermínaun near Kilsenora. The latter
probably gave the name Ballykinvarga, (Baile cinn-mharghaídh in
1380), i.e. "head of the market," to the adjacent townland, and
may have been connected with the remarkable ring wall, girt with
a wide abattis of pillar stones, not far distant. Some forgotten
assembly is commemorated at Eanty ("Fairs" or "gatherings")
in the east of Burren. Other assemblages will be dealt with later
under XVI. *Patterns*.

XV. *Wells and Well Customs.*

323 Hesitation in questioning poor people too closely about their
religious feelings and rites has, I fear, rendered my notes on this

⁸ Aenach was not merely a fair, but an assembly for merry-making, con-
sultation, etc.

[P. 229]

771 there's going to be a life hereafter," someone shouted out from the audience,
775 "There won't be.", and the others laughed so uproariously and for so long a time that she had to discontinue singing.

775 Only Catholics can enter Heaven, so most islanders claim, and among the faithful only saints go directly to Heaven at death, as preordained by God. All others who escape Hell must sojourn in Purgatory, where the temporal punishment of sins previously forgiven must be endured, and the guilt of unrepented venial sins cleared away. Conceptions of Purgatory are vague, but it is felt that severe punishments are meted out there, and that the stay of most Catholics is a long one, even though mitigated by earthly indulgences and penances. Theirs is an example of what some theologians term a "dreary interpretation of Purgatory," with its emphasis on the sinful nature of man. Several times we were told that we would enter Heaven even though not Catholic, because "religions are like canoes which set out on separate courses for a mainland port, yet all reach their destination;" always we were cautioned not to disclose this personal belief to the curate.

796 The most significant religious events of the year in Inis Beag are certain Catholic feast days, masses performed in homes twice each year, marriages, funerals, visits to the holy well, and several pagan observances. Of the many feast days commemorating the mysteries of the faith and honoring particular saints, eight are holydays of obligation in Ireland: Circumcision, St. Patrick, Ascension, Corpus Christi, Assumption, All Saints, Immaculate Conception, and Nativity. On these days the folk attend mass, abstain from work, and do not conduct business. The feasts of St. Patrick and Christmas among these, and the lesser feasts of St. Brigid, Easter, the patron saint of Inis Beag, St. John, All Souls, St. Martin, and St. Stephen, are considered the most important locally. Although pagan elements are incorporated to some extent in all feast days, reinterpretations are most in evidence in the feasts of St. Brigid, St. John, St. Martin, and St. Stephen, and thus they will be taken up later in the chapter.

785 Lent in Inis Beag is a period during which men are hard at work farming,
796 and social activities are at low ebb. The laws of fast and abstinence during Lent
[262] impose no hardships on the folk in light of the simplicity of their diet, with meat often absent from the table and only one full meal taken during the day as a matter of course. The standard of living in the island is such that for most people
[273] there is "too little to give up anything." Many islanders abstain from drinking alcoholic beverages during Lent, and will imbibe only on St. Patrick's Day, March 17th. Following the shipwreck (six days after Ash Wednesday in 1960), when salvaged Scotch whiskey was present in vast quantities, several men who had "sworn off" spirits took to drinking Vat 69 in the privacy of their homes; when the practice became known publicly, they claimed that they were "off the stout" only,

796 which is what most men drink ordinarily because of the high cost of liquor. St. Patrick's Day is much anticipated because it is a holyday of obligation when work ceases, drink can be taken by abstainers, and there is a dance in the boat house in the evening. The dance did not materialize in 1960, because the time of flood tide, when the grounded freighter could best be boarded, coincided with the time of the

[177] dance. Before mass on St. Patrick's Day, boys in groups search for shamrocks, which,
[292] if found, will ensure the finder "riches" in the future. Women that day wear

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green sweaters, men shamrocks in their buttonholes, and girls green hair ribbons, and there is much visiting in the afternoon following a special meal. Women spend the last weeks of Lent preparing new clothes for their spouses, their children, and themselves, which first are worn to mass on Easter. Eggs are accumulated before the feast day so that each member of the family will have several to eat at breakfast before mass, and in some homes the children gather and hide eggs the week before Easter to see who can collect the most by Sunday morning.

June 14th in Inis Beag is "pattern day," derived from the word patron, which honors the patron saint. Until the 1920s, when suppressed by the clergy, this day and the two days following it rivaled the 12 days of Christmas in festivity. Then it was customary for people from nearby islands and the mainland to visit Inis Beag, and the local folk in turn to attend pattern days in islands and communities in their vicinity. The celebration commenced with the digging out of sand from the church of the patron saint and from his tomb, or "bed," so that during the night of vigil islanders and visitors could pray while walking around the grave and rest in the church to gain special favor from the saint and from God. The day itself saw masses celebrated in the chapel, and athletic, dancing, and other competitions staged on the strand and contiguous common land. Tents were erected to accommodate vendors of food and drink, as well as solo and figure dancers who performed to the tunes played by visiting musicians of note. Most visitors departed at the end of the day, but those who remained were invited to take part in two more days of revelry in certain island homes, where dancing, singing, and drinking prevailed day and night. It was the prevalence of factional fighting and promiscuous behavior engendered by drunkenness which prompted the church to restrict the traditional practices of pattern day.

In the 1930s, the priest inaugurated a custom of celebrating mass on pattern day in the church of the patron saint; but it persisted for only two decades, and today the bed is cleared of sand but the church is not. My wife and I observed only 11 persons praying and resting during the night of vigil in 1960. Miraculous cures, appropriately embodied in legends and anecdotes, are claimed for persons who have propitiated the patron saint in this manner in the past, and most of those who still observe the vigil are seeking relief for physical ills. The most recent cures reported are for spinal meningitis, rheumatism, a deformed knee, and an eyeball pierced with a thorn. No work is done on pattern day now, and a dance in the evening, seldom attended by visitors other than tourists, is the only vestige of the gayety which once marked the day. This dance, just as the St. Patrick's Day dance, did not take place in 1960, even though an accordionist and two other mainlanders came out by *curach* to attend it; the shyness of local girls rather than the tide was the disruptive factor on this occasion.

All Saints is a holyday of obligation November 1st, and is followed next day by another feast—All Souls. One of the most popular of humorous anecdotes deals with All Saints' Day in a neighboring island, where once long ago the Church of Ireland pastor gave the day off to men working for him; when ten days later they asked to be off once again for St. Martin's Day, he inquired with seeming pique, "And where was Martin on All Saints' Day?" The feast of All Souls is also a workless day in Inis Beag, although the cemetery is given its one cleaning of the

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year during the early morning. The folk visit the church and graveyard throughout the day and are awarded indulgences for their prayers in behalf of souls of the dead residing in Purgatory. In the cemetery, prayers are offered for relatives, one at a time, and then for everyone buried there, those lost at sea, and those who have no one to pray for them. An islander going to the chapel makes a succession of visits inside to pray, retiring to the churchyard after each prayer; an indulgence is granted for every visit, and some children carry small stones and pile them outside of the chapel to keep count of the indulgences thus acquired. It is said of those who remain longest in the cemetery and make the most number of visits to the chapel that they are attempting to mollify the ghosts of relatives whom they treated badly when alive.

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The 12 days of Christmas commence with the feast of the Nativity on December 25th and end with the feast of the Epiphany on January 6th, and include the feasts of St. Stephen on December 26th, Holy Innocents on December 28th, and Circumcision on January 1st. This is the high point of the year for the folk, even though it is a much quieter period today than it was half a century ago, when social concerns outweighed religious ones. Work is suspended altogether on Christmas and the three days following it and on January 1st and 6th, and during the rest of the period only "light chores" are done. Importance is attached to the 12 days over and above their religious significance and the fact that little work is done; for at this time emigrants return to Inis Beag on holiday; if a marriage is to occur during the year it is likely to be arranged then; at least one party usually is given which attracts most of the adults; and the men gather in the pubs on several nights to sing, dance, and tell stories. For weeks before Christmas, rumors abound as to which relatives will visit the island, who will marry whom, and where the party will take place; these serve to sharpen the anticipation of the islanders and to make them less mindful of the worsening of the weather.

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In preparation for the Christmas season, new clothes are fashioned—as at Easter—to be worn initially on the five feast days, and it is usual for a man needing a new *crios* to have it woven in time for Christmas mass. Houses and streets are cleaned and repaired, fireplaces whitewashed, and supplies are taken in for the 12 days as steamer service is curtailed. On Christmas Eve, a special dish of corned ling or cod smothered in sauce is served at "Christmas supper," and large white candles purchased in the shops are placed on the dining table and in one or more windows of the cottage, to be burned nightly during the 12 days. The sight from the sea of the darkened island with its hundreds of candles rivals in beauty the view of the mainland coast far away on St. John's Eve, when bonfires are lighted as far as the eye can see. Relatives visit one another after Christmas supper, and when the children have been put to bed, stockings are hung above the fireplace and filled by the parents with oranges, candies, ribbons, pencils, handkerchiefs, and toys for the infants. Santa Claus is the gift giver, so infants are taught, and thus he can be used to promote good behavior on their part in the weeks prior to Christmas; this belief seldom persists into childhood, however, as older children are eager to disabuse their younger siblings of it. Adults usually do not exchange gifts, but they receive them from kin and acquaintances abroad to whom they in turn send Christmas cards. On Christmas Day, special cakes and breads are served

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